

Los sentidos de la noche

Liliana Edith Correa, University of Western Sydney

In 1994 I travelled to Cuba to spend time with *Teatro de Los Elementos*, a small theatre company dedicated to community and educational development projects. I met its director, José Oriol Gonzales, while negotiating his participation in the first Australian International Popular Theatre Exchange. I was involved in this project as interpreter, facilitator and performer. Consequently I spent nine months in Habana, Cumanayagua, Matanzas and the Escambray mountain house of renowned Theatre Company *El Escambray*, studying and living with the company. Cuba in 1994 was only beginning to open up to international tourism, *balseros* brought international media attention to the island, the gay community was still very much clandestine, and thanks to the infamous comment at the time—*Tenemos las putas más educadas del continente Americano*—prostitutes in Cuba were known as the most educated in the American continent. Diplomats and those with limited US dollars were able to buy in *Diplotiendas*. As a legacy of *El Bloqueo*—the US embargo—there were very limited resources to maintain the island's capital city. Everywhere after sunset was dark and even when part of the city may appear stuck in time, there was no sense of stagnation. Rather this complex and fascinating Habana in 1994 resembled to me a beautiful *mulata* alive, experienced in many forms of love and histories. Cuba and its contradictions impacted on me deeply. I felt at home, secure with all my senses awakened. I used to walk from *El Vedado* to *Habana Vieja*, sometimes waiting for the sunrise by *El Malecón*, only to get to the nearest bread shop—*panadería*—for spare pieces of the morning's first bread. Walking in the dark I got lost many times in parks, corners and once splendid avenues. Reflecting on my time in Cuba I wrote two poems titled '*Habana del '94*.' The third poem—presented here first—I wrote in response to a recurrent question that many people ask when I participate in activists' actions to raise awareness about the situation

of women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The accompanying drawings and poster design, 'Ellas,' are by Abigail Lutzen. The image composition for 'Not because I am Mexican' is by Tjanara Jali Talbot.



A Postcard: *La rosa de los vientos me cuenta que cuatro son los sentidos.*

Al Norte: La ceguera es blanca y al desierto lo iluminan huesos en cruz.

Al Sur: Un Ginko Bilova pinta en amarillo los domingos de infancia.

Al Este: El sol danza en intrincadas caricias.

Al Oeste: Un banco de hospicio absurdo y sucio espera.

Ciclón, Agosto: La Habana 1994

Los sentidos de la noche tienen rumbo y poemas salvadores.

Mi sentido Sur me lleva donde la tierra se viste roja y húmeda,

Bañada en olores y colores litoraleños bendita Yamanya

los catapulta del centro hacia la vida y con alas de mujer

vuela sobre agridulces sueños intercontinentales.

Hilando mantas de historias inconclusas que guardan

el secreto de tus manos y la memoria de la luna en tu vientre

mientras desesperados dedos en lágrimas dibujaban mapas

para buscarte en el vacío del insomnio.

Not because I am Mexican



Image by Tjanara Jali Talbot © 2010

Not because I walk
A trembling line
Between my portal door
And the maquila
But because
I am Woman—SOY MUJER
Not because the rage
Strangle sobs in my heart
And a cry transformed
In futile words
Scrape through
Clenching teeth
Breath of breaths
But because
I am Woman—SOY MUJER

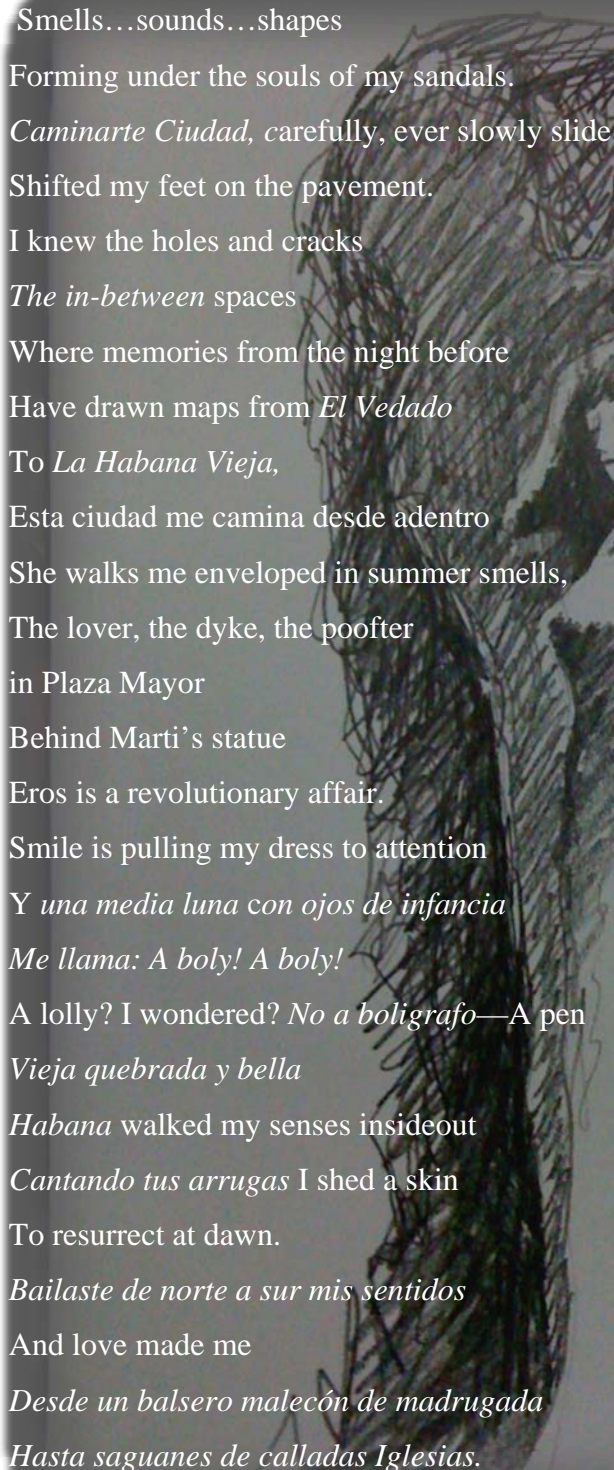
Adriana Martínez Martínez Elba Resendiz Rodríguez Fabiola Zamudio Gabriela "La China" (Leticia Quintero Moreno Yolanda Tapia Vega XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Adriana Saucedo Juárez Elba Verónica Olivares Fatima Flores Díaz Gabriela Bueno Hernández Leticia Reyes Benitez Silvia Rivera Salas XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Adriana Torres Márquez Elena García Alvarado Flor Idalia Márquez Gabriela Domínguez Aguilar Leticia Vargas Flores Zenaida Bermúdez Campa XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Aida Carrillo Elena Salcido Meraz Francisca Epigmenia Hernández Hernández Gabriela Edith Márquez Calvillo Lilia Alejandra García Andrade Rocio Agüero Miranda XXXX
 Alejandra Viescas Castro Elisa Rivera Rodríguez Francisca Lucero Gallardo Gladys Janet Fierro Vargas Lilia Juliana Reyes Espinosa XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Alicia Herrera Elizabeth Castro García Francisca Sánchez Gutiérrez Gladys Lizeth Ramos Esc Lilliana Frayre Bustillos Zulema Oliva Alvarado Torres XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Alma García Elizabeth Flores Sánchez Gloria Betances Rodríguez Lilianna Hodging de Santiago Rocio Barraza Gallegos Soledad Sáenz Acosta XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Alma Mireya Chavira (o Chavarria) Fávila Elizabeth Gómez Gloria Elena Escobedo Piña Linda Ramos Sandoval Rocio Miranda Agüero XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Alma P o Leticia Palafox Z Elizabeth Martínez Rodríguez Gloria Escalante Rodríguez Lorenza Isela González Alamillo Rocio Rincón XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Amalia Saucedo Díaz de León Elizabeth Ramos Gloria Olivares Morales Lourdes Gutiérrez Rosales Rosa Isela Carmona Dora Alicia Martínez Mendoza XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Amelia Lucio Borja Elizabeth Robles Gómez Gloria Rivas Martínez Lourdes Ivette Lucero Campos Rosa Isela de la Cruz Madrigal Leticia García Rosales XXXXXXX
 Amparo Guzmán Caixba Elizabeth Soto Flores Graciela García Primero Lucía Silva Dávalos Rosa Isela Tena Quintanilla Verónica Santillanes XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Ana Gil Bravo Elodia Payán Núñez Griselda Guardalajara Maldonado Luz Adriana Martínez Reyes Rosa Ivonne Páez Márquez Sofía González Vivar XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Ana Hipólito Campos Elsa América Arrequin Mendoza Guadalupe Ivonne Estrada Salas Luz Ivonne De la O García Rosa Margarita Arellanes García XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Ana Ma Gaudin Villalobos Elva Hernández Martínez Guadalupe Luna de la Rosa Mariana Hermosillo Quintero Rosa María Hernández XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Apolonia Fierro P Elvira Carrillo de la Fuente Guadalupe Verónica Castro Pando Marcela Hernández Macías Rosa María Lerna Hernández XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Araceli Gómez Martínez Emilia García Hernández Guadalupe Ramos Rodríguez Marcela Santos Garza Rosa María Rivera Susana Flores Flores XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Araceli Lozano Bolaños Brenda Buendía Muñoz Guillermina Hernández Chávez Marcela Viviana Rayas Arellanes Rosa Virginia Hernández Cano XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Araceli R Martínez Montañés Brenda Ivonne Ponce Hernández Hester Van Nieren Margarita Briseño Rendón Rosalba López Espinoza XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Aracely Emeralda Martínez Erica García Moreno Hilda Fierro Olivares María Agustina Hernández Rosario Aguayo M Sonia Yarell Torres Torres XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Aracely Gallardo Rodríguez Erika Ivonne Ruiz Zavala Hilda Rodríguez Núñez María Ascensión Aparicio Salazar Rosario Fátima Martínez Ángel XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Aracely Manriquez Gómez Erika Perez Ignacia Morales Soto María Cristina Quezada Amador Rosario Rocio García Leal Yolanda Álvarez Esquivias XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Aracely Núñez Santos Esmeralda Juárez Alarcón Inés Silvia Merchant María de Jesús Fong Valenzuela Samantha Elizabeth Martínez Gutiérrez XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Argelia Irene Salazar Crispín Esmeralda Leyva Rodríguez Irene Castillo María de Jesús González Sandra Corina Gutiérrez Estrada XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Bárbara Araceli Martínez Ramos Esmeralda Urias Sáenz Irma Angélica Rosales Lozano María de la Luz Murgado G Sandra Henry Monreal XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Bertha Luz Briones Estefanía Corral González Irma Arellano Castillo María de los Angeles Acosta Ramírez Sandra Juárez V Yesica Martínez Morales XXXXXXXX
 Blanca Estela Velázquez Valenzuela Eugenia Martínez Poo Irma Márquez María de los Angeles Alvarado Soto Sandra Maribel Frías García XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Blanca Guadalupe Sánchez Villalobos Irma Rebeca Fuentes María del Refugio Núñez María Sagrario González Flores Silvia Elena Rivera Morales XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Blanca Yadira Nuñez Irma Valdez Sánchez María del Rosario Cordero Esquivel María Santos Ramírez Vega Silvia Gabriela Laguna o Luna Cruz XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Brenda Alfaro Luna Jacqueline Cristina Sánchez Hernández María Dolores Osorio Armento María Santos Rangel Flores Silvia Guadalupe Díaz XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Brenda Berenice Delgado Rodríguez Jennifer Nino Valdez María E Luna Alfaro María Saturnina de León Silvia Marchant Verónica Martínez Hernández XXXXXXXX
 Brenda Herrera Jessica Lizalde León María Elba Chávez María Teresa Rentería Salazar Nora Elizabeth Flores Flores Silvia Ocañ Martínez Gutiérrez XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Brenda Ivette Gutierrez Jessica Martínez Morales María Elena Chávez Caldera María Victoria Arellano Z Norma Julissa Ramos Muñoz Castro Pando XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Brenda Lizeth Nájera Flores Juana González Piñón María Elena Saucedo Meraz Maribel Palomino Arvizu Norma Leticia Luna Holguín XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Brenda Patricia Méndez Vásquez Juana Inés Mares María Estela Martínez Maritza Toribio Flores Norma Leticia Quintero M Soledad Beltrán XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Brisa Narváez Santos Juana Sandoval Reyna María Estela Martínez Valdez Martha Alicia Esquivel Norma Mavella Palacios López María Rosario Ríos y esposo X
 Carolina Carrera Julia Luna Vera María Eugenia Mendoza Arias Martha Arguilo Castañeda Paloma Angélica Escobar Ledezma Sonia Ivette Ramírez XXXXXXXX
 Cecilia Covarrubias Aguilar Julieta Enriquez González María Inés Ozuna Aguirre Martha Cecilia Navarrete Reyes Paloma Rodríguez Ruges XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Cecilia Sáenz Parra Karina Avila Ochoa María Irma Blancarte Lugo Martha Claudia Pizarro Velásquez Patricia Alba Ríos Susana Enriquez XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Celia Guadalupe Gómez de la Cruz Kerina Daniela Gutiérrez María Irma Blancarte Martha Esmeralda Veloz Valdez Patricia Cortes Campos XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Cynthia Rocio Acosta Akramado Karina Camdelaria Ramos González María Isabel Chávez G Patricia Monroy Torres Teodora de la Rosa Martínez XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Clara Hernández Martínez Karina Soto Cruz María Isabel Haro Prado Esmeralda Herrera Monreal Paula Zepeda Soto Teresa de Jesús González Méndez XXXX
 Clara Zapata Zepeda Álvarez Laura Alondra Márquez María Isabel Martínez González Paulina León Teresa Melinda Herrera Rey Victoria E Parker Hopking XXXX
 Claudia Ivette González Laura Ana Inere María Isabel Nava Vázquez Olga Alicia Carrillo Pérez Perla Chávez Rodríguez Teresita López XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Claudia Ramos López Laura Berenice Ramos Monárrez María Isela Núñez Herrera Olga González López Perla del Castillo Violeta Mabel Álvarez Barrios XXXXXXX
 Cristina Quezada Mauricio Laura Georgina Vargas María López Torres Otilia Santos Trujillo Perla Parker Hopking Vanessa Horcasitas XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Cynthia Porriño de González Laura Lourdes Cordero García María Luisa Luna Vera Perla Patricia Sáenz Díaz Vanessa Diane Ketchersid de Flores XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Dalía Maribel Prieto Lea Gomez Sable María Luisa y sus tres niños Petra de la Rosa Masa Raquel Lechuga Macías Verónica Beltrán Manjarrez Maynez XXXXXXXX
 Deisy Salcido Rueda Leticia Armendáriz Chavira María Maura Carmona Zamora Rebeca Contreras (Tomasa Salas Calderón Virginia Rodríguez Beltrán XXXXXXX
 Domitila Trujillo Posadas Leticia Caldera Arvidez María Rocio Cordero Esquivel Reina Sarría o Sarahi Lara Lucero Verónica Huitrón Quezada XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Donna Maurine Striplin Boggs Leticia de la Cruz Bañuelos María Rosa León Ramos Roberta Georgina Coronel Molina (Viridiana Torres Moreno XXXXXXXXXXXX

'Ellas' by Abigail Lutzen © 2010

Not because I can talk
 The talk dressed the dress
 Wear the hats
 Multiple diverse hats
 Multiple diverse talks
 But Because
 I am Woman—SOY MUJER
 A body. A name. A shape
 Feet tracking pain
 They also trace my name
 While her breath names me.
Suspiro o Auyido
Loba o Diosa
Lenguaje ausente
Rescatado en una silaba,
La que me califica y me nombra.

Habana del 94

1. I walked in dark, pitch black all senses awaken



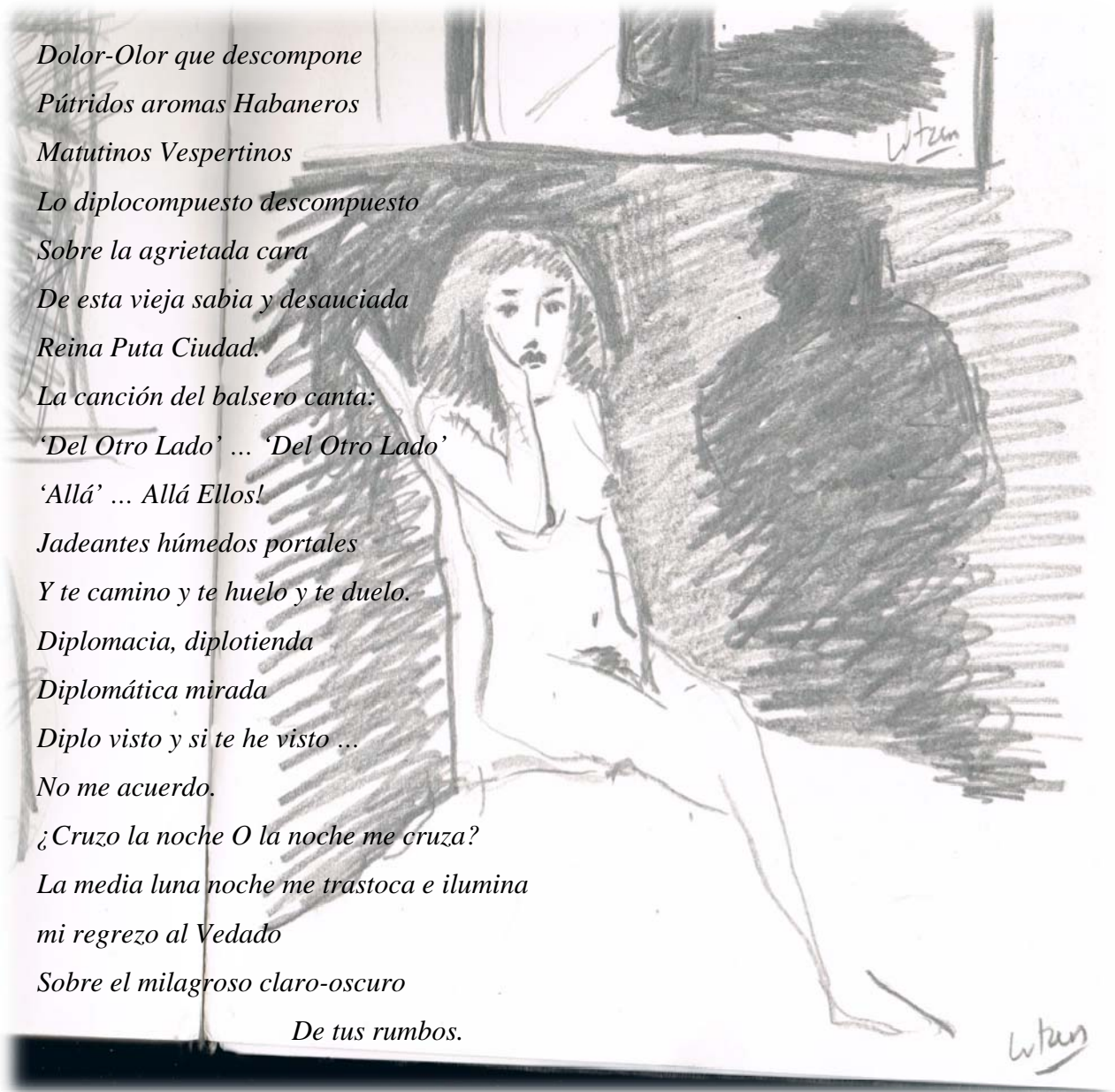
Smells...sounds...shapes
 Forming under the souls of my sandals.
Caminarte Ciudad, carefully, ever slowly slide
 Shifted my feet on the pavement.
 I knew the holes and cracks
The in-between spaces
 Where memories from the night before
 Have drawn maps from *El Vedado*
 To *La Habana Vieja,*
 Esta ciudad me camina desde adentro
 She walks me enveloped in summer smells,
 The lover, the dyke, the poofter
 in Plaza Mayor
 Behind Marti's statue
 Eros is a revolutionary affair.
 Smile is pulling my dress to attention
Y una media luna con ojos de infancia
Me llama: A boly! A boly!
 A lolly? I wondered? *No a boligrafo—A pen*
Vieja quebrada y bella
Habana walked my senses insideout
Cantando tus arrugas I shed a skin
 To resurrect at dawn.
Bailaste de norte a sur mis sentidos
 And love made me
Desde un balsero malecón de madrugada
Hasta saguanes de calladas Iglesias.

Drawing by Abigail Lutzen © 2010

Habana del 94

2. Caminarte ciudad

*Dolor-Olor que descompone
 Pútridos aromas Habaneros
 Matutinos Vespertinos
 Lo diplocompuesto descompuesto
 Sobre la agrietada cara
 De esta vieja sabia y desauciada
 Reina Puta Ciudad.
 La canción del balseiro canta:
 'Del Otro Lado' ... 'Del Otro Lado'
 'Allá' ... Allá Ellos!
 Jadeantes húmedos portales
 Y te camino y te huelo y te duelo.
 Diplomacia, diplotienda
 Diplomática mirada
 Diplo visto y si te he visto ...
 No me acuerdo.
 ¿Cruzo la noche O la noche me cruza?
 La media luna noche me trastoca e ilumina
 mi regrezo al Vedado
 Sobre el milagroso claro-oscuro
 De tus rumbos.*



Drawing by Abigail Lutzen © 2010

Los sentidos de la noche—Liliana E. Correa, June 2011